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BLM GRAND JUNCTION NEWS

Sept. 9, 2011

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BLM's Bangs Canyon receives high marks in recent survey

GRAND JUNCTION – What was largely an illegal dumping area south of Grand Junction just 10 years ago has transformed into one of the area's premiere outdoor recreation areas.

The Bureau of Land Management's 58,000-acre Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area receives thousands of visitors each year, with numbers continuing to grow. The area is located just five minutes from downtown Grand Junction, and includes the Lunch Loops and Bangs Canyon Trailhead.

The BLM received high marks in a recent study conducted by the University of Idaho with assistance from Colorado Mesa University. In the study, 95 percent of visitors were satisfied with the facilities, services and recreational experience at Bangs Canyon.

"The survey results illustrate how a community can transform the public lands in their backyard," said Catherine Robertson. "With the help of numerous partners and the whole community, we've created a wonderful recreational opportunity just outside Grand Junction."

In the last three years BLM and its partners have constructed about 8 miles of motorized single track trails, 20 miles of ATV trails and 15 miles of single-track non-motorized trails. Two new restrooms were installed and Little Park Trailhead was redesigned. Bike Park was installed in 2010. Work continues on rerouting unsustainable trails.

Key partners in managing this recreation area include the City of Grand Junction, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trails Association, Western Slope ATV, Western Colorado Conservation Corp, Hilltop Experiential Learning Project, Grand Mesa Jeep Club, Mesa County Criminal Justice Services, Responsible Recreation Foundation, and Colorado Mesa University.

Nearly 400 visitors to the area were randomly chosen for the visitor survey, which was conducted to measure how this site was meeting visitor's needs to comply with the Government Performance and Results Act.

The survey asked 44 questions about visitors' experience at Bangs Canyon. Fifty-two percent rated their overall experience as "Very Good", which is the highest score possible. Another 43 percent rated their experience at Bangs Canyon as "Good."

"Visitors gave our work at Bangs Canyon high marks throughout the survey, which asked about everything from quality of experience to courtesy of BLM staff to adequacy of signs," Robertson said. "It's great to see the hard work of our staff and partners reflected in the positive experiences of the visitors."

Visitors surveyed had come to Bangs Canyon primarily to hike or bike, although a wide variety of recreational activities were noted.

Despite the variety of recreation and the potential for conflicts among different uses, few such problems were identified – with the exception of dogs.

"A lot of issues with dogs at Bangs Canyon can be easily avoided if people pick up after their dogs and keep them under voice or leash control," Robertson said.

A full copy of the report is available at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo.html>.

The Bangs Canyon SRMA is located in Mesa County, Colo., 5 miles south of Grand Junction. The area is bounded by the Gunnison River on the northeast, Colorado National Monument on the northwest, East Creek (Hwy. 141) to the southeast, and Glade Park to the southwest.

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